

CLARK COUNTY
CLEAN WATER COMMISSION
Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

6:30 – 8:30 P.M.

Clark County Public Works Operations Conference Room B-1
4700 NE 78th Street, Vancouver

Clark County Clean Water Commission Members Present

Tim Crawford, Robert Even, Anne Jackson, Bill Owen, Patty Page, Susan Rasmussen, Art Stubbs, Virginia van Breemen, Ron Wilson

Clark County Clean Water Commission Members Absent

None

Clark County Staff

Trista Kobluskie, Sheila Pendleton-Orme, Earl Rowell, Henry Schattenkerk, Rod Swanson, Ron Wierenga, Jason Wolf

Public

Sig Francen, Corky Lambert, Thom McConathy, Paul Schmidt, Ken Waite

Call to Order

Introduction

The members of the Clark County Clean Water Commission, the public, and Clark County staff were introduced. The meeting was then called to order.

A quorum was achieved.

Approval

The October 5th, 2005 meeting notes were approved as submitted.

Agenda and material review

The packet includes:

1. 11/02/05 Clean Water Commission Meeting Agenda
2. 10/05/05 Clean Water Commission Meeting Notes
3. Community Development NPDES Activity Report for September 2005
4. 2005-06 Clean Water Commission budget as of September 30, 2005

Communications with the Public

Water Resources has received a very few complaints about drainage issues since the rains began.

Public Comments

Mr. McConathy made three comments.



1) He urged the Commission to recommend that filter vault systems be used as a last resort for stormwater treatment. He noted several problems with the systems, including sedimentation and maintenance expenses.

2) Mr. McConathy urged the Commission to recommend that the county use the best available science and follow the Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington by avoiding the use of regional stormwater facilities, such as the Curtin Creek capital project discussed at the October meeting. Mr. McConathy stated his opinion that regional facilities worsen or maintain poor water quality standards upstream by using natural drainage channels to convey polluted stormwater. Mr. Owen asked which part of the manual prohibits or discourages regional facilities. Mr. McConathy replied that the use of natural drainage ways, including Class 5 vernal streams, to convey stormwater is not acceptable under the previous or the newly revised manual.

Mr. Swanson responded that each regional facility needs individual evaluation. The Curtin Creek project is largely a wetland restoration that converts an existing ditch through the wetlands into what resembles a natural channel. It does not change anything upstream or downstream.

Mr. McConathy quoted Mr. Rowell from the previous meeting notes, “[the Curtin Creek project] will capture and treat the stormwater for about 5 square miles of property.” Mr. McConathy asserted that this is not in keeping with best available science or with the manual.

3) Mr. McConathy asked to know the new assignments of each Commissioner as noted in the previous meeting notes. Mr. Stubbs responded that the Commission has yet to discuss the matter but will make the information available when it does.

New Business

Stormwater360 Presentation on Filter Vault Systems

Mr. Lambert presented information on the company’s filter vault system design and maintenance. He invited the group to tour Stormwater360’s laboratory.

A 1998 national stormwater quality inventory showed that approximately 40% of water bodies in the U.S. were impaired and that stormwater contributed greatly to impairment. Urbanization was identified as a leading cause of stormwater pollution. Two issues identified were water volume and water quality.

A photograph showed water samples taken from the inflow and the outflow of a filter system, demonstrating the difference in water clarity after stormwater passes through a filter.

Mr. Lambert showed a cross-section graphic of a filter cartridge and an example of a cartridge itself. He explained that the cartridges are designed to use the entire filter media rather than the bottom of the media over and over again. The life of the cartridge is extended by a design that causes air bubbles to clean sediments from the outside of the cartridge.

Mr. Lambert discussed the various types of filtration media and their purposes—leaf compost pellets, ZPG (zeolite, perlite and granular activated carbon), perlite, granular activated carbon, and metalrx.



Mr. McConathy asked if any media filters surfactants. Mr. Lambert replied that some do, and they are generally used in areas with proven or suspected problems with surfactants. Mr. Lambert stated that surfactants are usually considered a lower priority in stormwater than other pollutants. Mr. McConathy replied that road runoff may contain surfactants, a known hazard to fish.

Mr. Swanson asked about the comparative cost of media. Mr. Schmidt stated that compost filters are generally about 30 % more expensive than perlite, but cost varies with volume and type of service.

Mr. Lambert discussed the types of service contracts offered for the filter vaults:

- Stormwater360 provides full service, including materials and labor, for inspecting and cleaning vaults and changing filter cartridges (maintenance)
- Owner purchases new cartridges from Stormwater360 and provides the labor for inspection and maintenance, then returns spent cartridges for recycling
- Owner purchases bulk filter media and provides labor for inspection and replaces the media in the existing cartridges (rather than replacing the cartridges)

Mr. Lambert described how stormwater enters the filter vault, flows through a settling bay in which gross solids settle out, percolates into the filter chamber, flows through filters, and then exits through outflow pipes.

Filters are available for vaults and for catch basins.

Removing solids from the vaults and basins—usually by vactoring—can extend the life of each filter.

Mr. McConathy asked if Stormwater360 ensures that only qualified contractors install the products since incorrect installation can lead to problems such as vaults operating exclusively in bypass mode (which does not treat any water). Mr. Lambert replied that jurisdictions are responsible for providing inspections of facilities. Mr. McConathy noted that Clark County personnel stated during a previous meeting that they lack the expertise to evaluate stormwater filter vaults.

Mr. Stubbs asked if the company checks its products for proper installation and maintenance. Mr. Schmidt responded that it offers installation assistance to contractors and an “online inspection” at the end of construction when the system is ready to receive stormwater. It also offers optional service to provide annual inspection or maintenance as needed. The company has no authority to force the owner to accept a service contract.

Mr. Stubbs asked if the water monitoring group of Water Resources monitors water quality below the outfalls of filter vault systems. Mr. Swanson replied no; the county assumes that the systems provide the manufacturer’s stated water treatment as approved by the Washington State Department of Ecology. Other types of stormwater systems designed under Best Management Practices (BMPs) are treated the same way. Mr. Wierenga concurred that the county assumes that facilities function as designed; then he stated that the key is proper installation and maintenance. Mr. McConathy asserted that the underground placement of vaults makes it difficult to know when they malfunction, unlike above-ground stormwater facilities such as bio-swales. Mr. Wierenga stated that each owner is responsible for looking into the vault to ensure its proper operation.



Mr. Swanson stated that the county requires an easement to inspect privately-owned facilities as a condition of approval, and owners must follow maintenance standards. A county inspector inspects each privately-owned facility once per year.

Mr. Lambert replied that jurisdictions use various approaches to ensure the maintenance of privately-owned filter vault systems. One county collects money for maintenance when the private system is installed and holds it in escrow until it is required. Several cities ask the company to send annual lists of new private systems and maintenance performed on systems in the jurisdiction. Another city sends annual maintenance reminder letters to owners.

Ms. Page asked how the spent media is disposed. Mr. Schmidt responded that the media is taken either to a landfill or to a facility that handles other catch basin solids. Mr. Stubbs asked if the material is considered hazardous waste. Mr. Schmidt replied no, unless site-specific conditions indicate that the pollutants are hazardous. Mr. Lambert said that the hydrocarbon count is high enough to qualify the spent media as contaminated, which requires it to be placed in a landfill.

Mrs. Rasmussen asked about the cost of labor for cleaning the vault and replacing the cartridges. Mr. Schmidt said that a crew can clean and replace the cartridges of a 10-filter system in about an hour.

Mr. McConathy urged the commission to recommend that county code be modified to encourage developers and Public Works to avoid using filter vault systems unless all other alternatives are exhausted.

Update on NPDES Activities by Department of Community Development

Ms. Pendleton-Orme is the NPDES Enforcement Office for the Development Inspection division of Community Development. She deals primarily with erosion control issues on large development projects that are in the infrastructure phase, putting in stormwater and roads.

Item #3 in the packet is the September report on her activities. Her enforcement activities are driven either by citizen complaints or by requests from Development Inspectors, who may need assistance to enforce erosion control measures on construction sites.

She frequently uses education to encourage contractors to adopt best management practices.

If a contractor or developer has repeatedly violated erosion control code, she will write a citation with a penalty rather than issuing a warning. Penalties and stop work orders are generally effective in gaining compliance.

Mr. Stubbs asked if citations are contested. Ms. Pendleton-Orme responded that none of her citations has been contested in more than two years.

Mr. Stubbs asked where the revenue from the fines goes. The fines are paid to Code Enforcement, broken down into an abatement fund and the general fund; the process is delineated in Chapter 32 of the code, the ordinance that covers enforcement of virtually everything. Fines run from \$1,500 to \$2000. Mr. Owen asked why the Clean Water Program does not receive any of the revenue. Ms. Pendleton-Orme responded that the goal of the fine is to achieve compliance—not to raise revenue to run the program. Mr. Rowell stated that the Commission could recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that some of the revenue flow back to the program.



Mr. Stubbs asked if any contractors have received multiple fines. Ms. Pendleton-Orme replied yes. Repeat violators are not necessarily deterred by the fine. Some consider it to be the cost of doing business.

Ms. Jackson asked if the fines were made public. Ms. Pendleton-Orme responded yes, with the exception of some information for the protection of the defendant's legal rights. The Department of Ecology's fines are announced publicly. Mr. Owen asked if the fine increases with repeated violations. Ms. Pendleton-Orme replied that the fine increases if problems continue on the same project, but the contractor's performance across multiple projects is not linked.

Update on the Volunteer Monitoring Program

Mr. Wolf is the Volunteer Coordinator for Water Resources. Mr. Wolf distributed the program's Fall 2005 newsletter. The goal of the program is to involve citizens in monitoring watershed health through water quality monitoring.

Mr. Wolf stated that the program can be divided into five categories: collecting data, storing data, utilizing data, giving back to volunteers, and the monitoring resource center.

Data collection is done by volunteers under supervision of Water Resources staff. 56 volunteers on seven teams are active this year. Four teams monitor streams four times per year. One collects data for a TMDL on Gibbons Creek once per month. Another team monitors Manley Creek on county property for baseline data. One team monitors Vancouver Lake every two weeks from May to October.

Mr. Wierenga completed a database this year to store the volunteer-collected data. Mr. Owen asked if the data would be made available on the web. Mr. Wierenga responded that the main water quality database will eventually be available on the web—not necessarily the volunteer database. The newsletter is available on the website at www.clark.wa.gov/water-resources.

Mr. Wolf described how the data have been utilized:

- Mr. Wierenga wrote four technical reports in 2005 using all volunteer-collected data
- Vancouver Lake Partnership has used the volunteer-collected data

In March, the program sponsored a presentation about the Clean Water Act for volunteers. In summer, the program held a barbeque for volunteer appreciation.

Mr. Wolf described the Monitoring Resource Center, a program to lend water quality monitoring equipment to interested parties. The center provides training on using the equipment. More than 50 organizations and individuals have used equipment in 2005.

Mr. Even asked if the program gains access to data collected using borrowed equipment. Mr. Wolf responded yes.

Mr. Owen asked if data from the monitoring group (including, but not solely, data collected by volunteers) can be used directly in the selection of stormwater capital improvement projects. He encouraged the monitoring program to structure water quality reports so that they may be used in real-world applications such as capital improvement selection.



Mr. Wierenga responded that most of the data collected by the monitoring program currently are intended only to characterize water bodies. The next logical step is to investigate upstream conditions that lead to the state of the water body. For instance, staff walked 25 stream-miles of the Whipple Creek watershed in 2004. The program now has enough data about some water bodies to make baseline assessments and to begin specifying sites where further study may help identify solutions such as capital improvements.

Mr. Wierenga noted that the program is beginning to link action with monitoring data. The Gibbons Creek volunteer monitoring project is phased in cooperation with the city of Washougal and Ecology. Water Resources will collect data for two years and then characterize seven sites in the watershed. Subsequently the jurisdictions will track down problems that lead to impairment. Water Resources will continue to monitor the sites long-term.

Mrs. Rasmussen asked how many volunteer monitors are active and how Mr. Wolf recruits new volunteers. Mr. Wolf replied that 56 are active. He attends the last session of each Watershed Stewards course to recruit volunteers. Currently, the program cannot utilize any more volunteers.

Mr. McConathy commented that the volunteer monitoring program should be expanded and deserves a greater commitment.

Review Commission Bylaws

Mr. Owen moved to table the review of the bylaws until the December meeting. Mrs. Rasmussen seconded. The motion passed.

Candidates for 2006 Officers

Mr. Stubbs asked for nominations of candidates to be elected at the December meeting.

Ms. Page nominated Mr. Owen for Chair. Mr. Owen accepted the nomination.

Ms. Jackson nominated Mr. Stubbs for Vice-Chair. Mr. Stubbs accepted.

Mr. Owen nominated Mr. Crawford for Vice-Chair. Mr. Crawford accepted.

Mr. Stubbs withdrew.

A vote will be taken at the next meeting.

Old Business

Update from the Capital Improvement Projects Subcommittee

Mr. Rowell noted that the subcommittee inserted a step at the beginning in which county staff determines the technical merit of the project. Applying the ranking criteria has become step two. The members will copy Mr. Even on the subcommittee documents.

Update from the Education Subcommittee

Ms. Page noted that the group has met twice. One meeting was held after Cindy Stienbarger attended the 4th National Conference on Nonpoint Source and Stormwater Pollution Education Programs. The conference echoed the Commission's desire to tie effort with results and with money. Mr. Stubbs reported



that Mrs. Stienbarger also learned to concentrate on one or two issues for public education about stormwater rather than dispersing focus over all the types of stormwater issues.

Ms. Page stated that the group would work on one or two areas of citizen behavioral change that would make the most positive impacts, and to try to focus a program on those things. Mr. Stubbs stated that they would use surveys to evaluate results. The next step is for Water Resources staff to identify three ideas for change in public behavior that would make the biggest difference.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Next Meeting

Mr. Stubbs asked each Commissioner to select an area of interest and to give reasons for sitting on the Clean Water Commission. Please bring responses to the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Clean Water Commission will be held on Wednesday, December 7, 2005 from 6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M. The location is Clark County Public Works Operations Conference Room B-1 at 4700 NE 78th Street, Vancouver.

Respectfully Submitted,
Trista Kobluskie

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